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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001908

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MCAP](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: UNION OF SOLDIERS MOTHERS DOES MUCH WITH LITTLE IN
KURSK

Classified By: Acting Pol M/C Bob Patterson. Reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: The Kursk representative of the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee Olga Dovenskaya does much to help conscript soldiers and their families, despite her lack of resources. She has achieved some impressive victories, helping families prosecute abusive officers and win settlements against the military for improperly drafting some young men. Dovenskaya devotes much of her time to helping conscripts learn about their legal rights and maintain their health. She also provides moral support to conscripts and their families, and helps them navigate military bureaucracy. She does all this despite working alone in a small office with few resources. End Summary.

Daily Activities

12. (C) Dovenskaya told us she handles about 300 requests for assistance each year. She said her biggest priorities are helping conscripts learn about their legal rights and how to take care of their health. Dovenskaya helps families and conscripts navigate the local and military bureaucracy in order to exercise their legal rights. She also provides conscripts with health and nutrition information so they can better take care of themselves and prevent the spread of disease. According to Dovenskaya, military doctors do not do enough to provide health education to conscripts.

Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee Scores Big Wins

13. (C) Dovenskaya told us one of her proudest accomplishments came when she helped a family successfully prosecute a military officer for beating their conscript son. The officer was given a suspended sentence of two years in prison. Throughout the process Dovenskaya helped the family file the proper paperwork and deal with the military judiciary. In addition, she often attended the trial to provide moral support to the family. In the end, Dovenskaya said she was most pleased when the defendant finally realized that it was wrong to beat conscripts.

14. (C) In another case, Dovenskaya helped a woman collect 15,000 rubles in damages from the Russian military for improperly conscripting her son. Under Article 24, Chapter E of Russian Federal Law 53 on Military Service, a person is eligible for a draft exemption if he is raised by a single parent and has a sibling disabled since birth. Dovenskaya said that a young man who fit this description was drafted anyway, and she worked with the conscript's mother to have him released from military service. A court awarded the mother 30,000 rubles in damages, but an appeals court reduced

the amount to 15,000 rubles.

Obstacles To Success

15. (C) Dovenskaya works alone and operates with no real budget; she relies on resources from the Union of Soldier's Mothers Committee in Moscow to operate. She has no money for advertizing, and so relies on word-of-mouth to inform people of the services she provides. Kursk city and regional governments provide her with assistance to pay her utility bills, and she pays reduced rent on her small office space. In addition, Dovenskaya has no local legal counsel to turn to for advice, and so must educate herself on the law so she can assist her clients. While she said she has a good working relationship with the local military prosecutor, she argued he could more actively help conscripts defend their rights.

Note

16. (U) Founded in 1990, the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee is dedicated to abolishing the military draft. It has over 300 offices throughout Russia, and claims to have assisted close to one million conscripts and their families thus far. In 2007 alone it received over 50,000 requests for assistance. The Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee helps young men find legal ways to avoid "conscript slavery" and defends the rights of those who have been drafted.
BEYRLE